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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - BUSH-PUTIN MEETING IN BRATISLAVA - CHINA ARMS EMBARGO  
PARIS - THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

1. BUSH-PUTIN MEETING IN BRATISLAVA
2. CHINA ARMS EMBARGO

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

WITH NEWS OF ANOTHER HOUSING SCANDAL CONCERNING FINANCE MINISTER HERVE GAYMARD RECENTLY BREAKING, HEADLINES TODAY AFFIRM THAT "GAYMARD IS IN A STORM" (RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO) AND "THE GAYMARD CASE PUTS RAFFARIN IN A BIND" (LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE) WITH REPORTS QUESTIONING THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS PRESENTING HIS RESIGNATION.

INTERNATIONAL STORIES FOCUS ON THE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENTS BUSH AND PUTIN. LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE HEADLINES: "BUSH - PUTIN: THE COOLING" AND RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO LEADS: "BUSH GIVES PUTIN A LESSON IN DEMOCRACY." POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR'S HEADLINE: "THORNY SUBJECTS AHEAD DURING THE BUSH-PUTIN MEETING." (SEE PART C)

WITH THE ON-GOING DEBATE BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE U.S. OVER THE LIFTING OF THE ARMS EMBARGO TO CHINA, LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION'S DIPLOMATIC EDITORIALIST JACQUES AMALRIC ASKS: "CHINA, RIVAL OR PARTNER?" (SEE PART C)

WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR CARRIES A SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT ON TERRORIST ABU MOUSSAB AL-ZARQAUI'S ORGANIZATION. "FOR MANY EUROPEAN ANTI-TERRORISM SPECIALISTS, THE PERSONALITY, MOTIVATIONS, EVEN THE EXISTENCE OF AL-ZARQAUI REMAIN A MYSTERY."

THE WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINES ANALYZE PRESIDENT BUSH'S VISIT TO EUROPE TO REINVIGORATE TRANSATLANTIC TIES. LE POINT TITLES ITS REPORT: "CHIRAC-BUSH: A RE-MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE" WITH FOREIGN EDITOR PIERRE BEYLAU NOTING THAT: "THE STRONG LINES OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY HAVE NOT CHANGED BUT THE METHODS HAVE EVOLVED." EDITORIALIST JEAN DANIEL IN LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR OPINES: "NOTHING HAS CHANGED IN THE CONCEPT OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY EXEMPLIFIED BY THE NOTION OF PRE-EMPTION, DESPITE CONDOLEEZZA RICE'S SPEECH IN PARIS AND GEORGE W. BUSH'S FINE WORDS IN BRUSSELS. THE U.S. STILL INTENDS TO DECIDE ALONE WHO THE ENEMIES ARE AND HOW BEST TO DESTROY THEM."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

BUSH-PUTIN MEETING IN BRATISLAVA

"BUSH DEMANDS DEMOCRACY FROM PUTIN"

LAURE MANDEVILLE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (02/24): "THE RUSSIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP IS LIGHT YEARS FROM WHAT IT WAS IN 2001 WHEN THE TWO HEADS OF STATE MET IN SLOVENIA. THE ALLIANCE THAT WAS CREATED TO FIGHT TERRORISM AFTER SEPTEMBER 11 IS HAVING MORE AND MORE TROUBLE RESISTING RUSSIA'S REVERSALS IN DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM. THE RECENT ATTEMPT BY THE KREMLIN TO TRY AND THWART THE ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE HAS PUT A SERIOUS STRAIN ON THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO PRESIDENTS. GEORGE W. BUSH IS ATTACHED TO A PRAGMATIC DIALOGUE WITH MOSCOW BUT WANTS TO GIVE IT A LESSON IN DEMOCRACY AT THE SAME TIME, TWO OBJECTIVES THAT APPEAR TO BE IRRECONCILABLE."

"CRISIS ON THE HORIZON"

SACHA BALIT VANDEBROUCK IN POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR (02/24): "GEORGE BUSH IS THE ETERNAL 'LESSON GIVER' AND SINCE YESTERDAY THIS ROLE HAS BEEN REINFORCED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION WHEN IT SANCTIONED THE PRESIDENT'S INTENTION TO REMIND VALDIMIR PUTIN OF THE BASICS OF DEMOCRACY."

"BUSH AND PUTIN: TROUBLE BREWING"

PAUL FALZON IN COMMUNIST L'HUMANITE (02/24): "THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT EMBARKED ON A SENSITIVE MISSION TO WIN OVER EUROPE. EVEN IF HIS VISIT DID NOT PRODUCE MUCH IN THE WAY OF RESULTS. IT DID SUCCEED IN PART IN IMPROVING THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP. TODAY THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT WILL MEET HIS

RUSSIAN COUNTERPART IN BRATISLAVA FOR A SUMMIT THAT WILL NO DOUBT BE TENSE. INDEED, OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS WASHINGTON HAS NOT MINCED WORDS WITH REGARD TO MEASURES TAKEN BY MOSCOW IN THE MEDIA OR ENERGY SECTORS. MOSCOW, FOR ITS PART HAS TAKEN PAINS NOT TO RESPOND TOO HARSHLY. AND TODAY VERY FEW SUBJECTS BIND THESE TWO FORMER COLD WAR ADVERSARIES."

CHINA ARMS EMBARGO

"CHINA, RIVAL OR PARTNER?"

JACQUES AMLARIC IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (02/24): "THE DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE U.S. OVER THE LIFTING OF THE ARMS EMBARGO TO CHINA WAS NOT RESOLVED DURING GEORGE W. BUSH'S VISIT TO BRUSSELS AND IS NOT ABOUT TO BE. THE U.S. SEES CHINA AS A RIVAL MILITARY POWER WHICH IS COMPLETELY THE OPPOSITE VIEW OF THE TWO EUROPEAN LEADERS MOST IN FAVOR OF THE LIFTING OF THE EMBARGO: JACQUES CHIRAC AND GERHARD SCHRODER. FOR THEM, CHINA IS THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT TRADE PARTNER IN EUROPE AND A STRATEGIC PARTNER THAT SHOULD NO LONGER BE HUMILIATED."

"CHIRAC-BUSH: A RE-MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE"

PIERRE BEYLAU IN WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE LE POINT (02/24): "CHINA MAY BECOME THE NEXT BIG APPLE OF DISCORD BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE U.S. AMERICA CONTINUES TO VIEW CHINA AS A STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC RIVAL WHILE EUROPE HAS NO INTENTION OF LETTING ITSELF BE EMBARKED ON AN ANTI-CHINESE CRUSADE." LEACH